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INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 9880  
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RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: MFA STATEMENT ON AL-ASKARIYA SHRINE  
BOMBING

REF: STATE 28802

On February 22, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issue the following statement regarding the al-Askariya Shrine bombing and its aftermath. Unofficial Embassy translation follows.

Begin text.

We regret and strongly condemn the bomb attacks in Iraq that caused the deaths of 22 people in Baghdad yesterday and those launched against the Askariya shrine in Samarra today, as well as a series of terrorist attacks launched against Sunni mosques.

It is apparent that those who resort to terrorism aim to start ethnic and sectarian clashes in Iraq. The most efficient way to disrupt this game is to avoid retaliation and enhance national harmony, without falling prey to provocations.

We wish God's compassion on those who lost their lives and we extend our condolences to their relatives, the Iraqi people, and the government.

End text.

WILSON